

CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

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NO. 6.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you—JOHN xiii. 34.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

JUDAS ISCARIOT.

Then Judas, who had delivered him up, when he saw that Jesus was condemned, repented, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, saying, "I have sinned, in that I have delivered up innocent blood," and they said, "what is that to us? see thou to that," and he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed and went and (ἀπνεῖτο) died with anguish." Matthew xxvii. 3--5.

Judas, notwithstanding his having betrayed his master for thirty pieces of silver, seems to have hoped, or at least imagined that Jesus would have exercised his miraculous power to overcome his enemies, or, to escape from the death, which they designed to inflict, but he no sooner saw that sentence was passed upon him, and that he was about to suffer a painful and ignominious death, than all the horror of his crime rushed on his mind, and overwhelmed him with dismay,—his love of money gives place to the sensations of remorse, he instantly hastened to the temple and braving the scornful looks and the bitter reproaches of the priests and rulers, he throws down the price of his treachery and the purchase of his peace with equal grief and indignation. He endeavoured to make the only reparation for his crime which the time allowed, or which he had then power to make. He condemns his own unprincipled injustice, and confessed the innocence of him whom he had betrayed; as shining testimony to the integrity of our Lord, from one, to whom Jesus had been so long and so well known, and who, if he had observed any one trace of deceit or imposture in his conduct, would no doubt willingly have embraced so fair a pretext to palliate his ingratitude and mitigate his pain! But so far was Judas from having been able to discern any thing in the smallest degree culpable in our Lord's conduct or doctrine, any, the least semblance of ambition in his views, of depravity in his actions, or of interest-edness in his schemes, that it is the con-

sciousness of his transcendent excellence and unsullied worth, the consummate purity and beneficence of all that he had ever said or ever done, which, after his treachery, rush on his remembrance and inflict the sharpest pangs upon his soul.

It has been a question not a little agitated among divines, whether the repentance of Judas was sincere, and if sincere, whether acceptable. Of its sincerity, I think no doubt can be entertained by those, who consider the impression which it appears to have made, not only on his spirit but *his conduct*; as soon as remorse seizes him, and his transgression, more black than hell, stares him in the face, he makes all the reparation in his power for the atrocity of his ingratitude, and the crime itself presses so forcibly on his conscience, that it overwhelms his soul in unutterable woe. His anguish is too great for his body to endure, and it appears to have produced a disease, which soon terminated his miserable existence—"he withdrew, and went and died with anguish," or more literally, was suffocated or choaked with anguish. This appears the true rendering of the verb *ἀπνεῖτο* in this place, and accords with the description of the traitor's death in Acts i. 18, better than the common translation "*he went and hanged himself*." The learned are acquainted with the elaborate enquiry into the death of Judas, and the meaning of the verb *ἀπνεῖτο* by Perizonius, Traj. 1766. 8vo. The verb *ἀπνεῖμαι* is used in this sense, which I have followed Wakefield and other writers in affixing to it, by Heroditus λιγότες οἱ πάτες ἀπνεῖτο αὐτῷ αχθοῦ. Euterp. § 131, meaning literally, they say that the girl was suffocated (or died) with anguish. Grotius, in his note on Matthew xxvii. 5. seems to incline to the opinion that the death of Judas was occasioned, in a natural manner, by the pangs of a wounded conscience, or the violent perturbation of the mind, bringing on a total decay of the animal strength, and quite extin-

guishing the powers of life. Grotius refers to the book of Tobit, iii. 12. where the writer says of Sarah, ελυπθησθετος ταπειχισθαι she was almost suffocated with excessive grief, and Oelian says Πολιαργος απνειξατο, Poliager died or killed himself with grief. The grief of Judas acting powerfully on the mind, and by sympathy on the stomach and bowels, seems to have brought on a dysentary or Diarrhoea, so violent in its action and so malignant in its kind, as to cause a prolapsis or falling out of the intestines, and which appears to have been the opinion of the pious and learned Dr. Mead, as quoted by Wakefield, *Evid. Christian.* p. 170. The writer of the Acts, describing the death of Judas, seems exactly to specify the particular disorder which his grief induced and from which his death immediately ensued, who says (Acts i. 18.) "*He fell flat on his face, and made a noise by bursting in the middle, and all his bowels were poured out.*" Such is Wakefield's translation of this passage, and it appears the best. Jehoram, (2 Chron. xxi. 19.) probably died of a similar distemper. *Jehovah smote him in his bowels with an incurable disorder, and his bowels came out and he died of grievous evacuations.* If we suppose the death of Judas to have taken place in the way here described, it gives us a much more forcible idea of the anguish of his mind, and the desolation of his heart, than if we suppose that he hanged himself, and fell headlong down a precipice. The former supposition seems to increase the greatness of his grief, which was so intense, as to put a rapid end to his existence, without the commission of actual suicide in a fit of frenzy or despair.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

That the doctrine of Universal Benevolence leads to licentiousness, is the great objection made to it by its opponents. "If" I have often heard it said even by those who have considered

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themselves as having undergone the new birth. "If I was sure there was no eternal punishment for sin hereafter, instead of submitting to the gloom and privations of a life of religion, I would give full vent to my desires, and take hold on the pleasures of the world, while life permits me." These pretended christians, by such assertions, give to the world but a very despicable evidence of the beauty and excellence of that religion which they profess.

The true, genuine religion of Christ I have always been taught, renders its professors comparatively happy, even in time, and, though they are not permitted, for a wise purpose, to escape all those accidents, privations and reverses of fortune, to which the whole family of mankind are subjected, during their pilgrimage on earth, yet, by that equable and contented state of mind which their religion confers upon them, they are enabled to bear up against these trials, knowing that the God who permits them to be inflicted, is their friend.

For a professor of such religion, the pleasures of the world have no attraction, nor were he to partake of them would they be any compensation for the real and present delights of the religion which he must renounce for them.

The religion of Christ instead of loading the brow with gloom and care, instead of rending the heart with anxiety—stamps the countenance with cheerfulness, and causes the heart to dilate with benevolence and love towards all mankind—it calls for no privations but such as are essential to the present as well as future happiness of its children; but, on the contrary, its God has enriched the face of nature for their use, and cheers creation with an universal harmony.

Its language is not that of an imperious tyrant, enforcing his hard decrees by the rack and torture, commanding his trembling subjects to abstain from the real enjoyments of life, and submit now, to a hard and grieved burden, in anticipation of enjoying hereafter "life eternal," as their reward; but, its language is that of a kind and affectionate father, feelingly interested for the welfare and happiness of his beloved offspring. Its endearing entreaties are, "come to me all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will

give you rest, for my yoke is easy and my burden light."

Such a religion when once it beams upon the heart of the humbled sinner, will have a sufficient attraction to cause him to conform his life to its precepts, without the necessity of holding up to his affrighted imagination the doctrine of eternal torments, and when once he has adopted it, nothing will induce him to relinquish it, for a life of sinful pleasure, for all the ways of religion are "ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." But, "the way of the transgressor is hard."

If we look around us upon mankind, we will find, that if the incorrigible violators of God's law, escape even the end, poverty, disease and misery—a life of infamy and an ignominious death, yet, their conscience sleeps not, and even though dissipation may, in some measure, for a time drown its voice, yet in that moment of solitude, when the noise of revelry and pleasure is no more, when the friends and participators of the hour of mirth are far distant, in the "hour of silence and of midnight," this divine monitor will be aroused, and inflict its pangs upon the breast of the offender.

The state of the wicked is well expressed in the language of scripture "he shall suck the poison of asps, the vipers tongue shall slay him. In the fulness of his sufficiency, he shall be in straits, every hand shall be upon him. He shall flee from the iron weapon, and the bow of steel shall pierce him through. All darkness shall be hid in his secret places. A fire not blown shall consume him. The heavens shall reveal his iniquity, and the earth shall rise up against him. The increase of his house shall depart. His goods shall flow away in the day of his wrath. The light of the wicked shall be put out, the light shall be dark in his tabernacle, the steps of his strength shall be straightened, and his own council shall cast him down, for he is cast into a net by his own feet—he walketh upon a snare—terrors shall make him afraid on every side; and the robbers shall prevail against him. Brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation,—his remembrance shall perish from the street,—he shall be driven from light into darkness, they that come after be astonished at his day,—he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty."

After presenting these two sketches of a life of religion and of sin, all I shall reply in answer to the assertion that the doctrine of Universal Benevolence leads to licentiousness, is, that a life of virtue and religion has sufficient intrinsic allurements and pleasures, to repay its votaries, without looking beyond the grave, for "*In keeping the commandments,*" we are told "*there is great reward,*" and the saint on the morning of the resurrection, on finding there is no eternal punishment for sin, will have no cause to regret that he has deprived himself in time of the pleasures of the wicked, for, by so doing he will have escaped the stings of conscience and horror of mind which followed the sinner until the hour of his death.

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FROM THE UNIVERSALIST MAGAZINE.

IMPORTANT QUERIES.

If all sin be infinite, and the natural man sin in thought, word and deed, as we are informed, are not all his deeds of charity, and kind offices performed to his fellow men, the love of his neighbours, the payment of his honest debts, and obedience to the laws of his country, heinous in the sight of God; who looks upon every thing that the natural man does with the utmost abhorrence? And what an enormous sum of guilt and misery will rulers bring upon themselves, by enacting laws to punish and prevent crimes, and protect the property, liberty, and lives of themselves, and their constituents? (unless they are so happy as to possess a change of heart.) And is it not lamentable that the whole natural family of men, should be, continually by the above bad acts, increasing their misery here, and laying up for themselves infinite treasures of wrath and anguish in the world of woe? How many infinite sins would they escape by a non-performance of them? We know not how to account for this folly in the conduct of men, but upon the old principle that "to err is human." Furthermore, if the natural man sin in thought, word and deed, what an infinite number of infinite sins must he commit? For it is but reasonable to suppose, that not a minute of his life passes, that does not bear upon its wing some act committed in thought word or deed; for

the mind never for a moment ceases to think. Allowing then, eight hours of sleep, in which the mind is not in its regular exercise, and there would remain nine hundred and sixty minutes, of every twenty-four hours, each of which would be big with an infinite sin. Multiply the same by three hundred and sixty-five days, and the amount would be, three hundred and fifty thousand, four hundred infinite sins each year; and allowing the average life of man to be thirty years, although many arrive to the age of seventy and upwards, and his guilt would increase to the enormous sum of ten millions, five hundred and twelve thousand infinite sins. Now allowing this calculation to be correct, upon the supposition that all sins are infinite, and the natural man sins every minute of his life, in thought, word or deed? how can the Almighty inflict on the sinner punishments adequate to his offences? One infinite punishment would not be sufficient to reward him according to his deserts; but there must be as many infinite punishments invented for him, as infinite sins which he has committed; or, else, one punishment that would be equal to ten millions, five hundred and twelve thousand infinite sins.—But, here I remark, that, I would not convey the idea that there are degrees of infinity, there is none but the superlative degree. Hence the truth that, (if all sins be infinite,) he that commits but one sin, or makes but one step from the path of virtue, is as guilty as the midnight assassin; yet, I think, the foregoing calculation will serve to elucidate the folly of the idea, that the natural man sins every moment of his life in thought, word or deed.

Again, as all mankind were once in a state of nature, and consequently commit some sins, they must all be subject to those infinite torments, unless some way be invented to remove these sins, which form infinite obstacles to their salvation. Should it be said that Christ has made an infinite atonement for the sins of all mankind, so that all may be saved who believe on him, the reply is, then, he could not have suffered as a human being, but must have died as an infinite God; for nothing less than the death of an infinite divine being, could atone for an infinite sin. There could be no efficacy in the suffering of a mere

man, or of humanity, although it should be united to divinity, that could remove an infinite sin. Hence the impropriety of the assertion, that sin is infinite, requires an infinite atonement, and that human nature by suffering has made this atonement.

But further; should it be admitted, for argument sake, that an infinite being died: (which involves in it an impossibility) still, would that do away infinite evil? Can one infinite object remove another, or destroy it? or would not they rather remain two eternal opposites? But, when one infinite object should attempt to remove ten millions five hundred and twelve thousand infinite objects, which would be but the sins of one man of thirty years old; (for the supposition is, that each sin is infinite,) the task would be hard indeed. But should we add to the sins of this one man the sins of the whole world, then to perform it would be a far more exceeding, eternal hardship.

We have made these observations, to expose the absurdity of the assertion that sin is infinite; and, yet, we conceive it absolutely necessary, that our opponents should prove it is, for upon this one position rests the doctrine of endless misery.

To be continued.

Christian Messenger.

Philadelphia, Saturday, September 9, 1820.

NECESSITY.

In answer to the observations contained in No. 4.

Continued.

In not believing that the foreknowledge of an event does in any manner imply its necessity, "C" is supported by the reasoning of the acute and justly celebrated Dr. Reid, and by Dr. Clarke—"Prescience and knowledge of every kind, says the former, being an immanent act, has no effect upon the thing known—its mode of existence whether it be free or necessary is not in the least affected by its being known to be future, any more than by its being known to be past or present. Thus, the deity foresees his own *future, free* actions, but neither his foresight nor his purpose makes them necessary."

"In the arguments drawn against liberty from the divine prescience, it must not, observes Dr. Clarke, be first supposed that things are in their own nature necessary, but from the divine prescience, or power of judging infallibly, concerning free events, which power is as much more extensive and infallible than in man, as the divine nature and understanding are superior to ours, it must be proved that things otherwise supposed free, will therefore unavoidably become necessary, which can no more be proved, than it can be proved that an action supposed at this present time to be free, is yet, contrary to the supposition, at the same time necessary; because in all past times, whether fore-known or not fore-known, it could not upon that very supposition of its being now freely done, but be future."

In reply to the last paragraph of "A." in which he says, "it remains for C. to show how that which is certain according to the foreknowledge of God, is avoidable by the free agency of man." I will observe, simply, that God foresees only that man will commit such acts, as he (man) of his own free will chooses; and, that the free agency of the latter is not displayed in avoiding what God, from an accurate knowledge of the constitution moral and physical of man, foresees that he will do, but in having been able, in the first place to will of his own self, without irresistible control, either of motive or of force, that he absolutely would commit the actions which he does commit.

If nothing more were meant by necessity than that man will act as God foresees he will, and not otherwise, I would cordially embrace the doctrine, but I cannot now believe that mankind could have made choice of no other course of conduct than the one they follow, to which they are impelled by "a chain of irresistible causes, having its first link in the hands of God"—this is to deprive them of will of every kind, for the very term *will*, implies freedom of will, the addition of the epithet *free* being always entirely superfluous, and accordingly in the Greek language it is never added.

The *brute creation* as they have no will, must act *necessarily*, for there is no medium between these two—their movements are spontaneous, proceeding from *appetite and desire*, but as

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these appetites and desires do not arise, as in us, from any opinions that the brute has formed, and are not therefore from himself, but are implanted in him by superior wisdom, for the preservation of the individual and the continuance of the species, and are such, that he must necessarily be led by them, his actions are therefore necessary in the true Philosophical meaning of the term.

Granting man to be a free agent, by no means renders him a self-existent being, as the writer in the fourth number of the present volume of the Messenger, page 15. would appear to imagine. By a self-existent being I understand one depending on no other for either existence or any faculty or quality of which he is in possession, but, this is not the case with man, he derives his being from his maker, and to him he is indebted for all he possesses, even for that free will by which he is enabled to determine whether to act or not to act—whether to be influenced by one motive or another—a self-existent being can be deprived of nothing which he possesses, but we know that man's life can be recalled by him who gave it, and I also believe that God, can deprive him of his free will whenever he thinks proper, for I by no means suppose free agency an essential faculty of man.

I am not at all desirous of doing away the force of the text of scripture quoted in the first column page 15. of the present volume of the Messenger, a man's heart or understanding does devise his way, but God who will never permit an action of mankind to injure, or interfere in its effects with that great scheme of his providence, by which every thing is finally to eventuate in the good of all his rational creatures, so overrules all the conduct of man that though the creature may have intended them for evil he intends or directs them for good—or in the language of the proverbs quoted “though a man's heart deviseth his way, yet the Lord directeth his steps,” so that out of partial evil universal good shall be produced.

In asserting in my first article* that the doctrine of necessity was prejudicial to morality; I had in view its in-

fluence upon mankind generally, and not upon any selected individuals, nor had I any desire to cast an imputation on the character of those distinguished Philosophers who have led the way in the defence of the doctrine, whose virtues, all must respect, yet I must be permitted to join with Dr. Priestley, in his acknowledgment that though the view of moral evil which considers it as having its origin with God, may “be innocent in itself, and even useful in speculation,” yet “no wise man can or would choose to act upon it himself.”

C.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.
Lev. xix. v. 19.

Among all the commandments which the Lord our God hath given his children, none can be more necessary for their happiness, or more accordant with the kind and benevolent feelings implanted in their breasts than that they should love their neighbours as themselves.

In our pilgrimage through life we find that the rose is intimately entwined with the thistle, the exuberant beauty of the valley is speedily succeeded by the rugged sterility of the mountain; the fairy images of hope and fancy are clouded with doubts and fears, and the rapture of enjoyment is interrupted by the acuteness of pain. Amid such vicissitudes of beauty, and deformity, of joy and sorrow, the soul of man would be desolate indeed were it not for the consolations administered by neighbours and friends. But how pleasing is it to know that amid the storms of adversity, some sympathies are excited in the bosoms:—some tears are starting from the eyes of others, whose arms will be expanded for our protection when weary and faint, and whose advice administered for our profit in scenes of doubt and peril. How do we rejoice when they view our prosperity with pleasure, and feel our adversity with sincerity. It is then only that we awaken ourselves to extensive usefulness, and exert our full power to enlarge the sphere of happiness,

we know that we live not for ourselves alone, but for others also; and in loving we rejoice in the idea that we also are beloved; we cannot but look up to our heavenly father with gratitude and re-

verence, and experiencing the beauty and benefit of his precepts, we are led to meditate and practise them and to praise him for riches more precious than silver and gold or all the treasures of the coffer.

But there is also another point of view in which this subject administers to our comfort. If in this world which is but the precursor of another, into which neither pain nor sorrow shall enter,—to love each other is recommended to us by a being who cannot be mistaken—if the wilderness of life will “blossom as the rose” beneath the influence of this divine precept, let us contemplate its effects upon a future state of existence, and here we will derive an argument upon which to form the joyful hope of the final restoration of all mankind.

If the saint is to extend affectionately his love and kindness to the defiled sinner here, if he is to love him as he loves himself even though he be an enemy, what tortures of mind must await him hereafter if the object of his affections is, as we are taught, from the pulpit, to endure tortures and misery unceasing. Has, let it be seriously asked, the author of our existence, destined this painful hour for his accepted and well beloved children?—he could not have been short sighted—he can not be false—can he then be cruel?—Has he not promised to enwreath this band of love with flowers, and is he finally when we have discovered their fragrance, to destroy the wreath? or are we not rather to indulge the anticipation that the hearts which he hath joined will never be “put asunder.”

How does the heart of man bleed at the story of parted and unfortunate love, and are not the same charities united in the character of “our Father which art in heaven?” Turn to our religion for an answer, and truly will it be given by the voice of the spirit which appeared unto Eliphaz, in that hour “when deep sleep falleth upon the senses,” asking “shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker?”

G.

PRINTING

Neatly executed at this Office